

# BRANDING UPDATE

# MONTANA

## WHY BRANDING?

Over the past several years “branding” has become one of the hottest buzz words in the marketing world. Every new product, service or company wants to have a brand that will engage consumers. Picking up on this trend, every destination from Kentucky to Kazakhstan has seized on a “branding campaign” as the silver bullet that would bring visitors by the car and plane load.

Done right, (Las Vegas) smart branding is a solid foundation for an integrated destination marketing program. Done wrong, (Washington State) branding programs are expensive and embarrassing wastes of time and money.

### What is a Brand?

The concept of branding emerged in the medieval marketplace, long before there was packaging and labeling that could help consumers differentiate between similar products made by a variety of craftsman. Artisans applied their mark, or “brand” to their products, so that consumers would know that this earthen jar, or silver cup or leather coat was made by a craftsman that they knew and trusted. A brand became a signal to a consumer that set their expectations for this purchase based on direct past experience or the general reputation of the craftsman.

Hundreds of years later, brands function in exactly the same way. They provide a simple, recognizable signal to consumers that shape their expectations. Without having to even consider the choice, a consumer instantly recognizes the difference in brand

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## JULY 2007

### Points of Interest

- The importance of branding: what it is, why we’re doing it
- Meet the team
- Tentative process timeline

### *Inside this issue:*

Why Branding?	1
In the Loop	1
Meet the Team	2
Branding Advisory Committee	3
Project Timeline (Tentative)	INS

## KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP

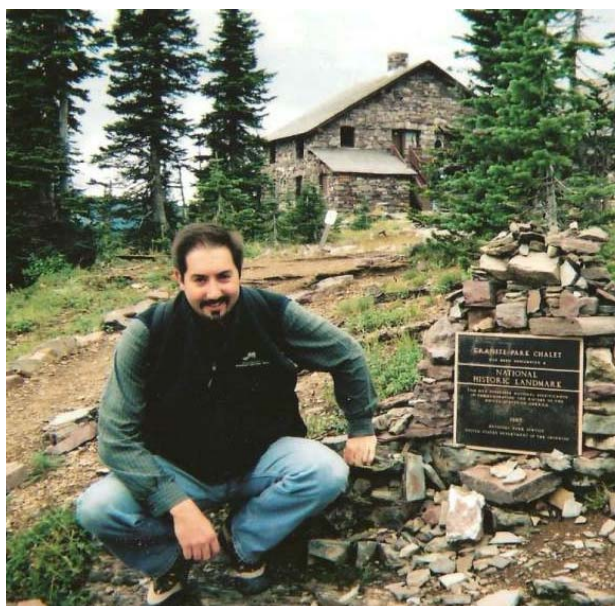
Welcome to the first edition of the Montana Branding Project Update. We’ll provide updates to the TAC throughout this process, and welcome your questions as we go along. Together we can strengthen the Montana tourism marketing program, and benefit the entire state.



---

# MEET THE MONTANA BRANDING TEAM

We all have our notions of what Montana is—and isn't—so it's important for us to be able to step back and let independent, experienced brand research consultants guide this process. We've begun working with a team well positioned to do just that.



Mike Bento, pictured at the Glacier National Park's Granite Park Chalet. Through his work with the National Park Foundation, Mike spent a great deal of time in Montana.

## MIKE BENTO

**LEAD CONSULTANT**

**MICHAEL BENTO MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

Mike brings twenty years of senior level marketing and communications experience from both the agency and client side to a variety of non profit and for profit clients, including most recently American Rivers, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the National Wildlife Refuge Association, Association of Partners for Public Lands, Eastern National, Elizabeth River Project, Jamestown 400 and Nexus Direct.

Mike was the Senior Vice President for Marketing and Communications at the National Park Foundation, overseeing all corporate and consumer marketing programs and channels. Mike guided the team that managed NPF's relationships with American Airlines, Discovery Communications, Ford Motor Company, Kodak, TIME Magazine, Unilever, Nature Valley and many others. He oversaw the direct marketing program, and created an integrated CRM program, unique within the non-profit sector. He built NPF's

online constituent base from non-existent to over 300,000 opted-in individuals, and built the donor base from a few thousand to more than 48,000 active donors.

Prior to NPF, Mike worked at Ogilvy Public Relations for thirteen years, directing the agency's efforts on behalf of Miller Brewing Company, Pfizer, the American Speech Language Hearing Association, and Nestle. From public affairs programs designed to mobilize beer distributors, to marketing and branding programs for government agencies and non-profits, Mike provided high level strategic counsel and directed implementation of multi-channel marketing and communications programs.

Mike holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Georgetown University, and has performed graduate work in philosophy at Georgetown. He has served on the Boards of the AIDS Action Foundation and the NAMES Project of the National Capitol Area. Currently Mike provides pro bono counsel to People Animals Love, a Washington DC non profit that brings dogs and other companion animals to at-risk children and teenagers, the mentally and physically ill, and the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals.

---

## **KEVIN SCHULMAN**

### **FOUNDING PARTNER PRIME GROUP**

Kevin Schulman, a founding partner of the research firm *prime group*, was previously Senior Vice President and Director of Research for a market research subsidiary of a large, publicly traded communications company.

His client experience includes organizations as diverse as Aspen Skiing company, US Youth Soccer, Massachusetts State Lottery, Churchill Downs and the United States Golf Association (USGA). His focus is on consumer needs assessment and using that insight to successfully brand and reposition clients to meet the demands of an ever-changing environment. Kevin brings a deep academic knowledge of sophisticated statistical methods and processes, complemented



Kevin Schulman, the project's lead research consultant, enjoys a hike with his two boys.

by years of practitioner application, to produce new market insights that account for the complexities and nuance of consumer attitudes, emotions, decision making and behaviors.

Kevin is a graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in economics and sociology. He finished all coursework for a Master's Degree in Survey Methodology with a social science/cognitive psychology concentration from the University of Michigan and University of Maryland at College Park. He is a member

of the American Association of Public Opinion Researchers (AAPOR) and the American Marketing Association (AMA).

He lives in the other Great Falls (Virginia) with his wife and three children.

## **WEN-TSING CHOI**

### **SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE PRIME GROUP**

Wen-Tsing works closely with the senior partners at *prime group* to transform research into useful strategic counsel for clients. He has over seven years of experience in quantitative and qualitative market research and consulting, including extensive experience in online research. He is responsible for: determining project objectives, setting timelines and coordinating personnel, designing survey materials, data analysis, and writing final reports. Some of his clients include: Educational Testing Service, The Washington Post, University of California, and the United States Golf Association.

Wen-Tsing holds a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University, and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California at Davis.

## **BRANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Montana's brand discovery process is an important one, and all of us have a stake in it. To bring a greater perspective to this process, Travel Montana has assembled a branding advisory committee representing research, marketing, and outreach arms of the tourism industry. The committee reviews and provides input on the process, research strategy, timeline, and deliverables.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Betsy Baumgart, Travel Montana  
Katy Peterson, Travel Montana  
Norma Nickerson, ITRR  
Kara Grau, ITRR  
Jeff Welch, Mercury Advertising  
Suzanne Elfstrom, Mercury Advertising  
Rhonda Fitzgerald, TAC/Garden Wall Inn, Whitefish  
Homer Staves, former TAC/KOA, Billings

## “WHY BRANDING?” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

attributes between department stores like Target and Nordstrom, automobiles like Kia and Jaguar, broadcasters like Fox and PBS, to name just six examples of organizations that have maintained strong, disciplined brands.

A brand is the collection of essential attributes that distinguish a product, service or destination from its competitors. David Ogilvy, the father of brand driven advertising said: “A brand is a complex symbol. It is the intangible sum of a product's attributes, its name, packaging, and price, its history, reputation and the way it is advertised. A brand is also defined by consumers' impressions of the people who use it, as well as their own experience.”

A brand is NOT a slogan, or advertising tag line. It's not a clever play on words that requires explanation. It's not something artificial that's imposed from outside or developed by a committee. A brand doesn't change from year to year, or even decade to decade. The marketing and advertising campaigns that deliver the brand are continually refined and refreshed, but the essential underlying brand strategy remains the bedrock on which the campaigns are all based.

### **Defining the Montana Brand**

Montana is an extraordinary place that should have a brand and communications strategy that matches its grandeur. Drawing from best practices in destination branding across the country, Travel Montana has begun the process of defining the Montana brand. To help with this effort, we've retained a team of outside consultants who have extensive experience with branding, having done successful projects for clients that range from the National Park Service to the Smithsonian to the U.S. Golf Association.

The first step will be a review of existing travel and tourism materials, followed by a series of facilitated workshops for stakeholders in the Montana travel and tourism industry, including business leaders and owners, elected officials, tourism staff, and other interested parties. The TAC will obviously have a major role in these workshops.

The next step will be to conduct research among potential visitors – to understand their perceptions of Montana, and how those perceptions match the attributes identified by the internal stakeholders. We'll be holding a series of focus groups in three different cities, and you'll be able to watch them live online. I'll share details about how to watch them as we get the dates finalized.

From this data we will develop some preliminary brand positioning statements, and would test those with actual traveling consumers, both travelers who'd visited Montana, and travelers who had not, to see if the draft brand positioning resonated and was credible.

The final step will be to develop a brand architecture that would define state driven tourism promotion, and would provide a template for the widest participation by the Montana tourism industry. The ultimate success or failure of this program is its ability to be adopted and carried to the public by all Montana tourism stakeholders, including Travel Montana. By providing stakeholders with a template they can follow, tens of millions of dollars in tourism promotion can be leveraged under a coordinated umbrella, delivering the Montana brand to millions of consumers making travel plans.



Travel Montana  
301 South Park Avenue  
P.O. Box 200533  
Helena, Montana 59620  
(406) 841-2870  
(406) 841-2871 fax

Industry site: [www.travelmontana.mt.gov](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov)